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Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies

Human rights questions: human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms

Letter dated 24 August 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Poland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon instructions from my Government and on behalf of the Permanent Representatives of the following Member States: Chile, Czech Republic, India, Mali, Portugal, Republic of Korea and United States of America, I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the following documents, which were adopted at the ministerial conference entitled "Towards a Community of Democracies", held in Warsaw on 26 and 27 June 2000:

(a) Warsaw Declaration, adopted on 27 June 2000, by 106 States participating in the Conference (see annex I);

(b) Final Communiqué issued by the Government of the Republic of Poland on behalf of the Convening Group of the Conference on 27 June 2000 (see annex II).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annexes distributed as a document of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly under items 39 and 116(b) of the provisional agenda.

(*Signed*) Dr. Janusz **Stanczyk**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

* A/55/150 and Corr. and 2.

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Annex I to the letter dated 24 August 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Poland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Warsaw Declaration

Towards a Community of Democracies

We the participants from
Republic of Albania, People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, Argentine Republic, Republic of Armenia, Australia, Republic of Austria, Azerbaijani Republic, People's Republic of Bangladesh, Kingdom of Belgium, Belize, Republic of Benin, Republic of Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of Botswana, Federative Republic of Brazil, Republic of Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Canada, Republic of Cape Verde, Republic of Chile, Republic of Colombia, Republic of Costa Rica, Republic of Croatia, Republic of Cyprus, Czech Republic, Kingdom of Denmark, Commonwealth of Dominica, Dominican Republic, Republic of Ecuador, Arab Republic of Egypt, Republic of El Salvador, Republic of Estonia, Republic of Finland, Georgia, Federal Republic of Germany, Republic of Guatemala, Republic of Haiti, Hellenic Republic, Republic of Hungary, Republic of Iceland, Republic of India, Republic of Indonesia, Ireland, State of Israel, Italian Republic, Japan, Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Republic of Kenya, Republic of Korea, State of Kuwait, Republic of Latvia, Kingdom of Lesotho, Principality of Liechtenstein, Republic of Lithuania, Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Republic of Madagascar, Republic of Malawi, Republic of Mali, Republic of Malta, Republic of Mauritius, Mexico, Republic of Moldova, Principality of Monaco, Mongolia, Kingdom of Morocco, Republic of Mozambique, Republic of Namibia, Kingdom of Nepal, Kingdom of the Netherlands, New Zealand, Republic of Nicaragua, Republic of the Niger, Federal Republic of Nigeria, Kingdom of Norway, Republic of Panama, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Paraguay, Republic of Peru, Republic of the Philippines, Republic of Poland, Portuguese Republic, State of Qatar, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe, Republic of Senegal, Republic of Seychelles, Slovak Republic, Republic of Slovenia, Republic of South Africa, Kingdom of Spain, Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, Kingdom of Sweden, Swiss Confederation, United Republic of Tanzania, Kingdom of Thailand, Republic of Tunisia, Republic of Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Eastern Republic of Uruguay, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Republic of Yemen,
in the Community of Democracies Ministerial Meeting convened in Warsaw, 26 – 27 June 2000:

Expressing our common adherence to the purposes and principles set forth in the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,

Reaffirming our commitment to respect relevant instruments of international law,

Emphasizing the interdependence between peace, development, human rights and democracy,

Recognizing the universality of democratic values,

Hereby agree to respect and uphold the following core democratic principles and practices:

- The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government, as expressed by exercise of the right and civic duties of citizens to choose their representatives through regular, free and fair elections with universal and equal suffrage, open to multiple parties, conducted by secret ballot, monitored by independent electoral authorities, and free of fraud and intimidation.

- The right of every person to equal access to public service and to take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives.

- The right of every person to equal protection of the law, without any discrimination as to race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

- The right of every person to freedom of opinion and of expression, including to exchange and receive ideas and information through any media, regardless of frontiers.

- The right of every person to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

- The right of every person to equal access to education.

- The right of the press to collect, report and disseminate information, news and opinions, subject only to restrictions necessary in a democratic society and prescribed by law, while bearing in mind evolving international practices in this field.

- The right of every person to respect for private family life, home, correspondence, including electronic communications, free of arbitrary or unlawful interference.

- The right of every person to freedom of peaceful assembly and association, including to establish or join their own political parties, civic groups, trade unions or other organizations with the necessary legal guarantees to allow them to operate freely on a basis of equal treatment before the law.

- The right of persons belonging to minorities or disadvantaged groups to equal protection of the law, and the freedom to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, and use their own language.

- The right of every person to be free from arbitrary arrest or detention; to be free from torture and other cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment; and to receive due process of law, including to be presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

- That the aforementioned rights, which are essential to full and effective participation in a democratic society, be enforced by a competent, independent and impartial judiciary open to the public, established and protected by law.

- That elected leaders uphold the law and function strictly in accordance with the constitution of the country concerned and procedures established by law.

- The right of those duly elected to form a government, assume office and fulfill the term of office as legally established.

- The obligation of an elected government to refrain from extra-constitutional actions, to allow the holding of periodic elections and to respect their results, and to relinquish power when its legal mandate ends.

- That government institutions be transparent, participatory and fully accountable to the citizenry of the country and take steps to combat corruption, which corrodes democracy.

- That the legislature be duly elected and transparent and accountable to the people.

- That civilian, democratic control over the military be established and preserved.

- That all human rights -- civil, cultural, economic, political and social -- be promoted and protected as set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other relevant human rights instruments.

The Community of Democracies affirms our determination to work together to promote and strengthen democracy, recognizing that we are at differing stages in our democratic development. We will cooperate to consolidate and strengthen democratic institutions, with due respect for sovereignty and the principle of non-interference in internal affairs. Our goal is to support adherence to common democratic values and standards, as outlined above.

To that end, our governments hereby agree to abide by these principles in practice, and to support one another in meeting these objectives which we set for ourselves today.

We will seek to strengthen institutions and processes of democracy. We appreciate the value of exchanging experiences in tne consolidation of democracy and identifying best practices. We will promote discussions and, where appropriate, create forums on subjects relevant to democratic governance for the purpose of continuing and deepening our dialogue on democratization. We would focus our deliberations on our common principles and values rather than extraneous bilateral issues between members. We resolve jointly to cooperate to discourage and resist the threat to democracy posed by the overthrow of constitutionally elected governments. We resolve to strengthen cooperation to face the transnational challenges to democracy, such as state-sponsored, cross-border and other forms of terrorism; organized crime; corruption; drug trafficking; illegal arms trafficking; trafficking in human beings and money laundering, and to do so in accordance with respect for human rights of all persons and for the norms of international law.

We will encourage political leaders to uphold the values of tolerance and compromise that underpin effective democratic systems, and to promote respect for pluralism so as to enable societies to retain their multi-cultural character, and at the same time maintain stability and social cohesion. We reject ethnic and religious hatred, violence and other forms of extremism. We will also promote civil society, including women's organizations, non-governmental organizations, labor and business associations, and independent media in their exercise of their democratic rights. Informed participation by all elements of society, men and women, in a country's economic and political life, including by persons belonging to minority groups, is fundamental to a vibrant and durable democracy.

We will help to promote government-to-government and people-to-people linkages and promote civic education and literacy, including education for democracy. In these ways we will strengthen democratic institutions and practices and support the diffusion of democratic norms and values.

We will work with relevant institutions and international organizations, civil society and governments to coordinate support for new and emerging democratic societies.

We recognize the importance our citizens place on the improvement of living conditions. We also recognize the mutually-reinforcing benefits the democratic process offers to achieving sustained economic growth. To that end, we will seek to assist each other in economic and social development, including eradication of poverty, as an essential contributing factor to the promotion and preservation of democratic development.

We will collaborate on democracy-related issues in existing international and regional institutions, forming coalitions and caucuses to support resolutions and other international activities aimed at the promotion of democratic governance. This will help to create an external environment conducive to democratic development.

27 June 2000

Annex II to the letter dated 24 August 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Poland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Communiqué

Towards a Community of Democracies Conference
Warsaw, Poland
27 June 2000

The Government of Poland, on behalf of the Convening Group, issues the following Communique.

1. The Foreign Ministers and other representatives of 107 countries from around the world that have committed themselves to a democratic path came together on June 26-27, 2000, in Warsaw, Poland to attend an historic conference entitled "Towards a Community of Democracies." The conference was hosted by the government of Poland, with assistance from the co-convening governments of Chile, the Czech Republic, India, the Republic of Korea, Mali and the United States.

2. The purpose of the conference was to formulate an agenda for enhanced international cooperation aimed at:

   Encouraging relevant international and regional institutions to be transparent, effective, and supportive of efforts to strengthen democracy;

   Facilitating the sharing of best practices to deepen democracy and to meet common long-term challenges faced by democracies;

   Improving mechanisms and practices that states have employed to respond to immediate threats to democracy; and

   More effectively coordinating assistance for countries undergoing democratic transitions and pursuing democratic consolidation.

3. States participating in the Community of Democracies conference acknowledged a debt of gratitude to preceding and proposed international gatherings supportive of democracy, such as the UN-sponsored International Conferences of New or Restored Democracies held in Manila in June 1988, in Managua in July 1994 and in Bucharest in September 1997, and which is scheduled to convene in Cotonou in December 2000; as well as the initiative of the Government of Mali to host in Bamako, in 2000, following the Declaration of the 1999 Moncton Summit of the International Organization of the Francophonie, an international ministerial level symposium on the practices of democracy in the francophone areas.

4. Community of Democracies participants also recognized the importance of measures such as resolution 1080 of the Organization of American States, decision 12/XXXV of the Organization of African Unity and the documents of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe on the Human Dimension, which commit member States to take certain steps in the event of an interruption of democratic government, as well as

the 1991 Harare Commonwealth Declaration which commits members to fundamental democratic principles.

5. In addition, Community of Democracies participants welcomed the 1999 Resolution on the Promotion of the Right to Democracy and the 2000 Resolution on Promoting and Consolidating Democracy which were adopted by the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva, and pledged support for future efforts towards adopting a similar resolution in the UN General Assembly.

6. It has been in the spirit of these extraordinary achievements, and of the principles set forth in the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, that Community of Democracies participants actively consulted to formulate and issue a Warsaw Declaration that expresses their common aspiration and commitment to promote, strengthen and preserve democracy. The Government of Poland, at the request of the Convening Group, will ask that the Warsaw Declaration be circulated as an official document of the Millenium Assembly of the United Nations.

7. Community of Democracies participants expressed their satisfaction with the large number of states attending the Warsaw conference, June 25-27, 2000. The Convening Group, which was responsible for issuing the invitations, recognized that since invitations were issued, some controversy had arisen regarding electoral processes in some countries invited to the conference. The Convening Group took the opportunity to express the need of every country to respect the core democratic principles and practices which governments participating in the Warsaw meeting pledged their best efforts to uphold. The Convening Group noted that the Warsaw Declaration affirms a full commitment to free and fair elections as the basis of authority and legitimacy of government and as the exclusive way to express the will of the people to choose their representatives, and declared its full support for, and confidence in, the role of international organizations in monitoring these processes.

8. Working through Ministerial Panels, Community of Democracies participants agreed to intensify coordination and cooperation among their governments to strengthen support for democracy by and within international and regional organizations; to share best practices regarding long-term challenges; to respond to interruptions of, and immediate threats to, democratic rule; and to coordinate democracy assistance as follows:

Panel I – Cooperation in International and Regional Organizations: Panel participants agreed to continue supporting the involvement of international and regional organizations in the task of strengthening democratic institutions and responding to gross human rights violations, in accordance with transparent standards and core democratic principles. There was support for creating a „democracy caucus" within existing institutions as a mechanism to promote dialogue and build consensus among those who share our goals. In particular, there was support for the idea of having such a caucus work on building support for the Government of Romania's democracy resolution at this fall's UN General Assembly. There was a common view in favor of making international and regional organizations more open and responsive to citizens' needs, and of harnessing information technology to promote democracy. Participants were committed to encourage international financial institutions and other appropriate economic agencies to consider the benefits of good governance, transparency, rule of law and accountability in their deliberations.

Panel II – Sharing Best Practices: Panel participants agreed that pursuit of the ideals of democracy is a continuous process. They agreed that sharing best practices is an effective way to realize their common objective of preserving and strengthening democracy and supporting new and emerging democracies, in a spirit of cooperation, equality and mutual respect. Participants consider it important to continue the dialogue without creating elaborate structures that may be difficult to implement at this stage and without restricting the flexibility that a new forum must have to respond to new ideas. They agreed that they should meet as often as possible, especially during the UN sessions and other international meetings. They would also welcome voluntary initiatives from member countries to hold dialogues on specific issues concerning the democratic process.

Panel III – Responding to Threats to Democracy: Panel participants agreed on the need for proposals to strengthen prompt reactions by international and regional organizations in order to enhance prevention and deal with crises. This should include not only the most extreme cases, such as the overthrow of democratic governments, but also in cases of irregular elections. Participants agreed that responses by regional organizations to threats to democracy need to be strengthened, and that regional organizations should coordinate to share lessons learned among themselves. Participants also suggested that the Community of Democracies at large should consider ways to support efforts by regional and multilateral organizations to prevent and respond to threats and crises. It is important to promote dialogue aimed at improving and establishing cooperation on this issue. To this end, participants felt that this issue could be studied further, perhaps by establishing an ad hoc panel of experts to examine different mechanisms, practices and experiences. Participants also stressed the need to address terrorism and other transnational challenges to democracy, in accordance with norms of international law.

Panel IV – Coordinating Democracy Assistance: Panel participants concurred on a common framework for cooperating on democracy assistance that includes the principles and practices embodied in the Warsaw Declaration but recognized that institutional arrangements will vary depending on the cultural, historical, socio-economic and other conditions which make each country unique. The panel also agreed that genuine partnership and cooperation among donors, host country governments and civil society is the most effective approach to democratization. Finally, the panel welcomed the offer of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) to create a secretariat to help coordinate democracy assistance and, if possible, to create a common framework for such assistance.

9. Community of Democracies participants emphasized that the economic and social dimensions of democratic development, including the eradication of poverty and equal participation by women in the democratic process, should be urgently addressed. The Convening Group agreed that mutual cooperation is urgently needed to help eliminate poverty in order to fulfill the promise of democracy, and noted that the Warsaw Declaration includes specific language under core democratic principles and practices that affirms economic and social rights and equal participation by women. The Declaration also cites the need to strengthen cooperation to fight terrorism and other transnational challenges, and to do so in accordance with respect for human rights of all persons and for the norms of international law. The Convening Group pledged to

ensure that these subjects are fully discussed at future meetings of the Community of Democracies.

10. In view of the significant number of actions proposed and endorsed at the June 25-27 conference in Warsaw, participants decided that future conferences of the Community of Democracies would assist them to pursue their goals, and welcomed offers by the governments of the Republic of Korea, Chile, Mali and Portugal to host future conferences.

11. Finally, Community of Democracies participants expressed appreciation to the government of Poland and to other governments of the Convening Group for their successful efforts towards arranging the Warsaw conference, as well as for their continued willingness to follow post-conference activities and to cooperate with and assist the governments of the Republic of Korea, Chile, Mali and Portugal in planning future conferences.